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Greenwood Area Claims Four 2009 SBA Small Business Award Winners

With a total of four winners, the Greenwood area has once again proved it is the Francis Ford Coppola of South Carolina's small business version of the Oscars: The Small Business Administration (SBA) awards. The SBA will honor the winners at an awards ceremony as part of the sixth annual Salute to Small Business on Wednesday, April 29, at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.

- **Mathis Plumbing, Heating and Air** is the **2009 Jeffrey Butland Family-Owned Business of the Year** for both South Carolina and the eight-state southeast region. The company spans three generations and more than five decades.

Ralph Mathis started the business in 1952 out of his garage with a single truck. Today, Ralph's sons, Jimmy and Wayne Mathis, own and operate the business, which continues to evolve. From a husband and wife team and one truck, the company has grown to 39 employees, a fleet of "rolling warehouses" -- large panel trucks that carry up over 2,000 parts -- and a multitude of both residential and commercial services. In addition to Jimmy and Wayne, their sister Jean Ann and their two respective sons are keeping the Mathis family in Mathis Plumbing, Heating and Air.

In 2005, the former Ralph Mathis Plumbing Co. acquired another family-owned business, Benjamin's Heating and Cooling, and soon changed its name to Mathis Plumbing, Heating and Air. The company has also expanded into the industrial market with HVAC installation and repair services and industrial plumbing.

Despite its growth, the Mathis family business's focus remains customer satisfaction... and it shows. Even in the economic downturn, Mathis Plumbing, Heating and Air continues to maintain consistent increases in sales and profits.

In addition to numerous community and charity efforts outside of the business sphere, Mathis Plumbing, Heating and Air is involved in "Partnership Alliance," Greenwood's economic development arm, and is a 25-year member of the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce. Mathis was nominated by Jeffrey Smith of the Greenwood Chamber of Commerce.

- **Dyan Webb**, owner of Corporate Communications in Greenwood, is the **2009 Women in Business Champion of the Year**.

A trained speech pathologist, Webb started her own small communications business, Corporate Communications, in 1996. Not only does she help women business owners refine their professional images through Corporate Communications, but Webb also draws from her own business experiences to freely provide start-up guidance to other women entrepreneurs.

All SBA programs and services are provided on a non-discriminatory basis.

Webb also often provides her company's services for free to benefit area small businesses. Recently, she taught a session on business etiquette and networking for the Greenwood Chamber's *Connect: YP* group, an organization that fosters business success for area young professionals.

Webb has been a member of the Business & Professional Women (BPW/USA) organization for more than 20 years. The BPW/USA mission is to "achieve equity for all women through advocacy, education, and information." She is involved with both the local Greenwood chapter, where she has served in every position, and the state chapter, where she has served a term as president. She has also served as a representative to the organization's national board. In 2003, Webb was named the BPW/USA Woman of Accomplishment for South Carolina.

Webb was nominated by Jeffrey Smith.

- **David Dougherty**, Vice President and Relationship Manager at Countybank, is the **2009 Financial Services Champion of the Year**.

At Countybank, Dougherty regularly works with small business owners to assist them in attaining their financial goals. As a small business owner himself, he knows how the importance of small businesses to the local economy and has an in-depth understanding of their financing needs. He works closely with clients, even providing business plan assistance and recommending additional entrepreneurial education as necessary. Because Countybank is a complete family of financial services -- including banking, mortgage, insurance and investments -- Dougherty is able to look holistically at customers' financial needs. With his devotion and attention to detail, Dougherty has been called a "miracle worker."

Dougherty's commitment to Greenwood's small business community extends beyond his job description. He regularly works with the Greenwood Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the Greenwood Chamber to provide financial education to area small business owners. Most recently, he was a guest speaker at the SBDC's local FastTrac® entrepreneurship program. In addition, Dougherty serves on the Clemson University Regional SBDC advisory board and is a former member of the Partnership Alliance for Greenwood County Board of Directors.

Dougherty was nominated by Mickey Conway of the Clemson University Upper Savannah Small Business Development Center in Greenwood.

- **Anthony Santella**, Associate Professor at Erskine College and director of Erskine's Small Business Support Center, is the **2009 Home-Based Business Champion of the Year**.

Prior to joining the Erskine College faculty, Santella provided in-depth consulting services on marketing and information technology to home-based small businesses from his own house outside of his teaching position at Lander University. In essence, he ran a home-based business devoted to helping home-based businesses.

At Erskine, Santella created the Small Business Support Center (SBSC) in the fall of 2007. The SBSC provides free seminars, consulting, mentoring, incubation space and project assistance to area businesses, including home-based businesses. Santella based the SBSC's programs on feedback from local entrepreneurs and economic development offices and a survey of over 4,000 area businesses.

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Santella then collaborated with the chair of the business department to form the “Get Real Initiative,” which pairs Erskine business students with local small businesses through the SBSC. The Initiative has provided invaluable assistance to the small businesses and a unique real world opportunity for the students.

In addition to his work at Erskine, Santella regularly teams up with the local Small Business Development Center and the Greenwood Chamber to further assist the Greenwood area business community.

Santella was nominated by Mickey Conway.